

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

Blessed Lolo

Until 2011, a journalist had never been beatified, let alone made a saint.

When the Vatican announced that Manuel Lozano Garrido, a 20th century reporter and spiritual writer from Spain, would be beatified, I'd never heard of him, never even heard that his cause for sainthood had been advanced. So I went Googling to see what I could find.

Information, actually, was scarce, and most of it had been published in Spanish. But, in bare outlines, his life was nothing less than extraordinary.

Manuel Lozano Garrido—or “Lolo” as he is affectionately known—was born in Linares, Spain in 1920.

During the 1930s, a time of great persecution for the Church in Spain, the teenaged Garrido acted as Eucharistic Minister, secretly bringing the Body of Christ to those who were homebound or sick.

Because of his secret Eucharistic activity, Lolo was arrested. He spent Holy Thursday of 1937 in prison. The Blessed Sacrament was passed to him hidden in a bunch of flowers. There, Lolo erected a monument, adorned with sacks and brooms, and spent the entire night in prayer with some other youths who were also in prison because of their faith.

Just a few years later, at the age of 22, he began to suffer from a crippling paralysis that eventually left him confined to a wheelchair and, in the later years of his life, completely blind. The disease was spondylitis, which inflamed his vertebræ and left him deformed. Despite it all, he managed to live with great joy. He had a tremendous devotion to the Blessed Mother and an even deeper devotion to the Eucharist.

As one writer described it:

“Being already a paralytic—from his house balcony, just facing Saint Mary Church main gate, where he was baptized and where he now rests in peace—from that balcony he halted work and said, ‘And now, face to face to the tabernacle, I’m going to have a little talk with Him.’”

Despite his infirmities, Lozano’s great dream was to be a writer and journalist, and when a friend gave him a portable typewriter as a gift, Lolo happily accepted it. Though his hands and fingers could barely move, he managed to type these first words: *“My Lord, thank You. The first word, Your Name, may it always be the strength and soul of this machine ... May Your light and clearness be the mind and heart of all that type on it, so that everything written may be noble, fair and promising.”*

Over the course of his life, Lolo managed to write nine books on spirituality, an autobiographical novel, and hundreds of articles and essays.

He died in 1971. Soon after, journalists began urging Rome to make him a candidate for sainthood. Finally, in 2001, Pope Benedict declared him “venerable,” the first step on the road to canonization. In December, 2009 Pope Benedict XVI authorised the recognition of a miracle, attributed to Manuel’s intercession, in the cure of two -year-old Rogelio de Haro Sagra in 1972. In June 2011 he became “Blessed.” And journalism could soon have its first journalist patron saint.

Several years ago, a priest who knew him told an interviewer about the profound connection between Manuel Lozano’s life and the Blessed Sacrament.

“I remember that one of his first newspaper articles, when he was already sick, was published on the day of Corpus Christi,” the priest said. “He entitled it ‘At the Crossroads of Thirst and Hunger.’ ... Above all, frequent reference to the Eucharist can be found in several pages of his published works.”

However, what must be emphasized is the way he lived his illness, rooted in his Eucharistic devotion. This profound Eucharistic devotion is what led him to ask his sister, as if it were a testament, that when he died a Mass should be celebrated for his soul immediately, if possible. And so it was.”

Blessed Lolo—pray for us.

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